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# WHAT A DIETITIAN SHOULD KNOW TO AID FOOD CONSERVATION

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There is one special problem which probably confronts the dietitian, particularly the one who has recently entered her profession, that is, the quantities of food she should buy, so that she will have enough and yet not waste the food needed to win the war.

The dietitian is taught all about the different kinds of food for certain diets, how to prepare them and to teach the student nurses these things. She knows the end products of the food stuffs, why certain cases need particular foods and the reason for preparing them in a special way, but very little is taught her about quantities, especially large quantities.

Of course she has the unending question of the exact number of patients. Over night the number may radically increase or decrease. This, however, is soon fairly well estimated, when the class of patients, the kind of cases and the possible patronage of the hospital have been established in her mind. Then, too, she can refer to the number registered during the same month the previous year, although this is not always dependable.

Whether the dietitian buys the food herself, or whether she gives her order to the superintendent, or whoever the purchasing agent may be, it is easier for both when she knows her exact needs. This eliminates the necessity of a new order every few minutes. New orders, however, may be necessary when a new special case comes in or when a patient is given a special diet. Time and labor are saved by exact knowledge.

It is well known that two great items of our war-time food conservation are meat and wheat. Here are some rules that are valuable. The best estimation of the quantity of meat to order has proved to be one-fourth pound for every person who can have meat. To every twenty pounds, add five pounds for bone and waste. This also allows for loss in cooking. For poultry, one-third pound should be estimated.

In the modern large hospitals there is usually a bread cutter. The dietitian can soon learn how many slices can be cut from a loaf. The number varies from ten to fourteen. The ends of the loaf need not be wasted, they can be dried and ground for bread crumbs, thus eliminating any waste of wheat. Or they can be used for croutons or imperial sticks. In some hospitals the cut bread which returns from the nurses' table is used for toast.

The number that can be served from various canned foods is difficult for the dietitian to estimate. This depends greatly upon the kind of food used. For instance, more servings can be obtained from a can of peas or of cherries than from a can of beets or of halved peaches. A very dependable estimation is twenty-eight to thirty-two servings from a No. 10, a gallon can, while a No. 3 can will serve from six to eight.

Milk, butter and eggs present problems of their own. The systematic dietitian who plans her menus a week or so in advance can more readily calculate how much of these foods she will need for cooking. Then to the amount of milk needed for cooking, she should add the amount necessary for the patients to drink. One quart per day, each, is a liberal supply unless there may be a forced milk diet. The number of eggs needed for special drinks can be added to the number necessary for cooking.

If a butter cutter is included in the kitchen equipment, it is easier to estimate the quantity needed. These cutters usually make forty-two servings in a pound. When a knife is used, it is more difficult, but with a little practice about the same number can be estimated if care is taken. Dip the knife in hot water in order to cut smoothly.

Fresh fruits are naturally the easiest to estimate. If one is serving half an orange for breakfast, she divides the number to be served by two, but to this quanity she must remember to include the number for special diets.

Dry cereals vary in the number of servings, according to the kind and the size of the package. Ten servings are obtained from a package of puffed rice. Some of the manufacturers of uncooked cereals are sensible enough to state the number of servings in the respective package.

Most fresh vegetables, which afford variety to menus, should be estimated by weight. Loss in cooking must also be considered.

The thoughtful, careful dietitian should never order foods necessary for life-saving emergencies, such as milk, eggs and oranges, on such a close margin that she will be out of them.

Fortunate indeed is the dietitian who can order daily or semi-weekly as compared to the one who orders monthly, only.

The veteran dietitian has undoubtedly learned these things through experience, but for the one who has just entered the field, these suggestions will surely prove helpful. Besides, in an economical sense, they help conserve the food which will win the war.